



# The Elton High School Specialist Arts College

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 105354  
**Local Authority** Bury  
**Inspection number** 287207  
**Inspection dates** 20–21 September 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Sonya Williamson HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Walshaw Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Bury
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16		Lancashire BL8 1RN
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 7631434
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	930	<b>Fax number</b>	0161 7613849
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr J Coles
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr N Scruton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 September 2001		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

The Elton High School is an average sized, comprehensive serving an area of mixed housing with typical levels of social deprivation. Approximately 1 in 10 students is from a minority ethnic heritage. Most have English as their first language. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average, as is the number eligible for free school meals. The school has been a specialist visual arts college since 2004.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The Elton High School judges itself to provide a satisfactory standard of education for its students and inspectors agree. However, there are many strengths which are bringing about improvement. It is a popular school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive in agreeing that the school serves their children well, particularly in terms of personal development and support. Parents of students in Year 7, who have recently started at the school, appreciate the encouragement their children are receiving and the range of initiatives to ensure that they settle in well. The school consults well with students and a range of external partners; it often acts upon their views. The initiatives that have arisen as a result of the school's specialist visual arts college status are enriching the environment and the opportunities for students to work with their local community.

Teaching and learning, personal development, care and guidance are all good. Combined together these strengths are helping the school to move forward, maintain its improvements and help most students make good progress as seen in lessons during the inspection. However, the direction set by leaders and the monitoring by managers have not yet had sufficient impact on achievement and standards. Although achievement is satisfactory overall and standards meet national expectations, some of the most able students are not achieving as well as they should, particularly in English and science at Key Stage 3. Managers of subject areas are evaluating their practice and beginning to share expertise but this is not yet systematically embedded. There have been good developments in the assessment and tracking of students' progress but not all teachers consistently use this information to ensure that they tailor lessons to the individual needs of students. The curriculum, however, is rich and varied, particularly in Key Stage 4, and is increasingly meeting students' needs. There are good opportunities for students to engage in interesting activities outside lesson times and, those who do, appreciate the time that their teachers give. The capacity for improvement is strong at all levels of the school. Staff are well qualified and leaders and managers are committed to equality of opportunity. The school is therefore well placed to sustain the trend of improvement.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of students reaching Level 6 in English and science at Key Stage 3.
- Share good practice to raise the achievement of higher attaining pupils.
- Challenge and support teachers to use assessment information more fully to inform their planning, so that all learners are enabled to do their best.
- Evaluate how the information gained from monitoring is consistently and effectively used to raise standards.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that standards and achievement at both key stages are satisfactory. Students who enter the school in Year 7 are slightly above average in terms of what they have achieved so far. There are relatively few higher attainers. The standards reached by the end of Year 9 have been rising. Results in mathematics are good but achievement in English and science is below what is expected. In 2005, boys tended to do less well than they should. The trend of improvement continues through Key Stage 4. In 2005, GCSE results exceeded the targets set and compared favourably with the results achieved in similar schools. There were, however, insufficient high grades.

Results in 2006 reflect the improving trend. Underachievement is less marked. Boys are more engaged because the changes to the curriculum have meant that it is better suited to their varying needs. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make expected progress. Through analysing the performance of students in a variety of ways, the school has an accurate picture of which subject areas and groups of students are not performing well enough. It is tackling these pockets of weakness and is well placed to continue to drive up standards and achievement.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. This particularly relates to good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, resulting from the visual arts as a result of specialist status, and wide ranging extra-curricular provision. As a result, students take on roles and develop skills that will help them for their future lives and help them appreciate cultural diversity in Britain and beyond. For example, multiculturalism is studied in Year 7. Students are given opportunities to contribute to the school and outside community through citizenship activities including the school's own charity Art to Heart, and are becoming conscientious citizens.

Students enjoy their education. They have positive attitudes towards learning and their attendance is broadly in line with the national average. They also know how to keep themselves safe and are beginning to eat more healthily. Whilst behaviour is good overall, some students disregard uniform arrangements.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen, most were good and a number were outstanding. Lessons are planned with an effective mix of activities

which capture the interest of students. Students work hard and respond very well to the tasks set. Work is generally tailored to meet the range of learners' needs but there is insufficient provision for higher attaining students. Teachers have good classroom management skills and pace their lessons well. In the most effective lessons, the teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and provide plenty of opportunities for students to be active in their learning. Students are encouraged to assess their own work and that of others. In the lessons seen, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made good progress. Their needs were well understood by teachers and teaching assistants.

Following training for staff on the value of assessment and target-setting, teachers are becoming more confident in using data to monitor learning. However, it is not yet sufficiently well used to inform planning and raise standards.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides a good curriculum. From Year 8, higher attaining students have the opportunity to take a second language. Information and communication technology (ICT) is now taught throughout school and all students have access to recognised ICT qualifications.

Some aspects of the curriculum are outstanding. As befits the specialist college status, five visual arts courses are offered at GCSE. Vocational courses are provided by the school and in partnership with a local college. This wide range of provision and the flexibility brought by the pathways approach enables the curriculum to meet the varied needs of 14 to 16 year olds very well. Consequently, they are well motivated and well prepared for their next stage of education or employment.

The wide range of sporting and other activities available to students before school, at lunchtime and after school, holiday booster classes and visits are all helping to raise attainment.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides good care, guidance and support for students. Pupils report that there is always someone to turn to if they have a problem. Where any bullying occurs, it is quickly dealt with.

The school has been consolidating good practice in relation to the tracking of students' progress to inform guidance. Individual learning plans are being developed. As a result, most students, including the more vulnerable, are well supported to reach their personal and academic targets.

There are effective systems to support all pupils on entry to the school and students are well informed about options and choices after they leave school. All statutory procedures, including those for child protection, are in place and developing to meet

the needs of current legislation. Although health and safety procedures are appropriate, review outcomes are not adequately recorded to make them fully secure.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall but there are significant strengths which are enabling the school to raise achievement. The leadership team is giving impetus to improvement planning but their aspirations are not yet fully realised. However, the progress being made with achievement indicates a strong capacity for improvement. Clear direction is being set but there is inconsistency in the way the most appropriate actions are determined and the consistency with which they are applied. This shows that the school's self-evaluation, though satisfactory overall, is not yet fully accurate. The very good practice in some departments is beginning to be shared and senior and middle leaders are improving self-evaluation so that priorities for action are carefully chosen. Although monitoring systems are increasingly wide ranging, new initiatives are not always evaluated sufficiently rigorously to ensure that they impact on standards. Leaders and managers at all levels promote equality of opportunity to enable learners to achieve well but insufficient emphasis is given to ensuring that teaching meets the needs of higher attaining students. The governors carry out their responsibilities with commitment and provide excellent support to the school. Careful consideration is given to how resources are used but decisions are insufficiently evaluated for their impact on standards. Good consideration is given to how to achieve a bright learning environment despite the poor physical condition of some areas of the building. Leaders and governors have devised effective procedures for the recruitment and retention of teachers and recent appointments are strong. Partnerships with initial teacher training providers support developments in teaching and learning. Systems of support for new staff and professional development for all teachers help ensure that students are taught well.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you so much for the way you supported your teachers and the team of inspectors during the recent inspection of your school. You guided us politely to where we needed to be and you talked to us with confidence.

We agree with your school's own judgement that it is satisfactory overall. It is clear that you enjoy the good variety of tasks that your teachers plan for you in lessons and the time they give to providing a wide range of activities, extra help with learning and visits outside lessons. The students in Year 7, and their parents, are really pleased with the way you have helped them to settle in and become a real part of the school community so quickly. You make a good contribution to the life of your school and are beginning to support the local community too. Your school gives you a rich mix of subjects and courses to choose from and supports you well so that most of you are improving the progress you make in lessons. We think the teachers might provide even more challenging activities for those of you who could achieve very high results.

We have asked the school to increase the proportion of students reaching Level 6 in English and science at Key Stage 3 and, if this is your target, you should work extra hard with your teachers to try to achieve this. Some of your teachers are especially good at planning challenging activities and we would like them to share their good ideas more widely with each other. As you know, the school keeps lots of information about how well you are doing and what your targets should be. We want them to use this information more. This means that teachers might plan your learning in different ways to help meet your individual needs. The senior managers in your school are very keen to ensure that you all do as well you should. We have asked them to check that the new ideas they try really do make a difference to the standards you achieve by the time you leave school.